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# THE MYSTERY OF THE CROSS

BY THE MOST REVEREND

NATHAN SÖDERBLOM, *abp., 1866-1931*

Sometime Archbishop of Upsala, Sweden

TRANSLATED BY THE REVEREND

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THE MYSTERY OF THE CROSS



## PREFACE

THIS LITTLE BOOK consists of one chapter, taken as it stands from the late Archbishop Söderblom's book, *The Story of the Passion of Christ*,<sup>1</sup> which is a devotional study of the Passion, written by him in fulfilment of his pastoral duty to the Swedish people; this chapter, the central chapter of the book, has been translated because it has a like message for us. It is the work of a modern-minded man, and reflects its author's wide and specialist knowledge; but it contains no weakening-down of the central mystery of Christianity to suit the supposed needs of the modern mind. It contains the old answer, the old Gospel of the love of God and the sin of man; and its aim is to tell the modern world in its own language that no answer but the old answer will suffice. It is the work of a great man of many-sided genius, as a theologian, a specialist in Comparative Religion, a leader of his nation, an important

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<sup>1</sup> *Kristi pinas historia*, Svenska kyrkans diakonistyrelses bokförlag, Stockholm, 1928.



international figure, a prince of the Church, a pioneer of Christian unity, a pastor of souls, a musician; yet with all this it is fundamentally the work of a simple Christian, whose whole trust is in the Cross of Christ, "to me and to numberless Christians our highest, nay our only hope in life and death."

His career was one of amazing brilliance. Yet the greatest wonder of his life story is the way in which, as the years went by, the Passion and the Cross came to take an ever more central place in his thought; and of this the chief external cause was the tragedy of the Great War.<sup>2</sup> His appointment as Archbishop of Upsala coincided almost with the outbreak of war—he was consecrated on November 8, 1914—and the burden of the war fell upon him in a special way; to him, almost more than to any living man, the war was a battle between brothers. He had intimate friends on both sides; he had spent seven years as Swedish chaplain in Paris, between 1894 and 1901; he had many friends in England and Scotland, especially from the time of the *rapprochement*

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<sup>2</sup> See an essay by Professor Aulen on "Nathan Söderblom as a Theologian," in the *Church Quarterly Review*, October, 1932, Vol. CXV, pp. 15-48.

between the Anglican and Swedish Churches, which began in 1908, while he was professor at Upsala, and in which he played a leading part; and he was actually residing in Germany, as professor at Leipzig, when the war broke out. During the war he made constant efforts to arrange a meeting between representative Churchmen from the belligerent nations, efforts which only attained success at the Stockholm Conference for Life and Work in 1925; but for the time being all was in vain. The Archbishop of a neutral nation could only look on helpless, without the distraction of endless practical duties and the excitement of the conflict, which in large measure mitigated the suffering of the war for citizens of the belligerent nations. Then it was that he was driven back to ceaseless pondering on the Mystery of the Cross. It was his part to long to do something, yet to be helpless; and suffering is essentially helplessness, passivity. But Christian suffering, as in the Head of the Body, so also in the members, is at the same time activity, the activity of long enduring love, which in the midst of sin and its awful consequences still goes on believing in God and trusting God.

This little book is thus in a real sense born of



the calamities of our time; and thus it can have a message for the children of this troubled age. "I know not," he wrote in 1919,<sup>3</sup> "whether we Christians, whether the Christian Churches, are worthy, whether there is in us the power of the Spirit, or whether it shall be accomplished by the instrumentality of others. But one thing I know. The only religion that is now of any account, the only faith which now can satisfy the deep, hungering souls of all languages and nations, is a new and irresistible preaching of the Cross, a fresh and convincing experience of the mystery of salvation, which is revealed in the self-offering of the Saviour in life and death. . . . To weaken down and cleverly to explain away the central mystery of Christianity and of salvation is of no use in these hard times. The experience of the power of the Cross and of suffering to reconcile and to restore, till lately regarded as old-fashioned and objectionable, has become the most palpable and necessary of the truths of religion, nay, the truth itself—in whatever forms it be expressed."

A. G. HEBERT, S.S.M.

KELHAM, NEWARK, ENGLAND.

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted in *C. Q. R.*, October, 1932, pp. 42, 43.



# THE MYSTERY OF THE CROSS

## I

THE MYSTERY OF THE CROSS is the mystery of vicarious suffering.

He who does ill fares ill. What a man soweth, that shall he also reap. It is no wonder that suffering has in all ages and among all peoples been regarded as punishment, according to the law of retribution. We receive the due reward of our deeds. Such is the law of life; and in judging ourselves we do well to follow this rule so far as it is possible.

Needless to say, this is not the final solution of the riddle. Others also suffer; and when their disgrace, their vicious lives, their suffering, are the direct consequence of our act or our acquiescence, the matter is not cleared up by the simple admission of our guilt. So long as the consequences fall on ourselves, they may rightly be regarded by us as the just judgment on our fault or our negligence; with all its bitterness, the suffering that we must endure

*Read: The Christ of the Gospels -  
(Arthur W. Robinson)  
Chapter 13. pg 153*

bears witness that there is a living God who is near to us and cares for us. But the bitter grief of the corruption and ruin of other lives is a matter that has been all too little heeded by the Church—not to speak of other religions—and receives all too little attention in her thoughts and her prayers. When we discern a causal relation between our evil deeds and other men's sufferings, it is no answer to the heart's anxious questionings to say that their suffering is a punishment for the fault that we committed; rather, we are driven to recognize a mysterious solidarity of individuals with the race. This solidarity is a solidarity of woe and of a curse. But there exists also a solidarity of blessing, of atonement and restoration.

Already we begin to see that suffering cannot be wholly explained as the consequence of wrong-doing and as punishment.

## II

THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SUFFERS; at the same time, it may be, the shameless and ungodly prospers. The more insolently he tramples under foot the laws of God and man, the more successful his way seems to become; meanwhile, he who keeps his hands clean and has re-



gard to justice is visited with ill-success and sickness, loss and pain. All races have had to face this problem. Most commonly men have sought to explain matters by looking for hidden sins in themselves and in others: cleanse thou me from my secret faults. Or they have found false consolation in the belief that injustice and undeserved suffering, and the bitter contrasts between happiness and unhappiness, sickness and health, poverty and excess of wealth, crippledom and strength, are all to be explained by wickedness or virtuous living in some previous existence on earth. Here we meet the contributions of the two wonderful races which have laid the foundations of our higher, and our highest, spiritual insight: the people of Hellas, and the people of the Old Testament.

Aeschylus, who died 456 B.C., the splendid creator of the Greek drama, sees the titan-god Prometheus fastened to the rock in dreadful torments:

"Drive now the pitiless tooth of the steel wedge  
With all thy might right through the captive's flesh . . .  
And then secure strong bands across his breast."

Prometheus had been guilty of the greatest of all sins in the eyes of the classical Greek piety,



the sin of *hybris*, the pride whereby a man is not content to be a man, but, for good or evil, seeks to overpass the narrow limitations of human existence. The chorus admonish him:

“Thou art presumptuous, refusing  
To yield at all to hard constraint;  
Thy speech is far too bold and free.”

Oceanus chimes in:

“Know thou thyself, and change thy frame of mind.”

But Io has a dim sense that his suffering has a deeper meaning:

“Hapless Prometheus, who to the sons of men  
Shalt be a savior, why must thou suffer so?”

Here there is a dim sense that the suffering of the righteous is not the result of blind fate or of the caprice of a tyrannical God, but has a meaning in the whole context of human life. If the whole Prometheus trilogy of Aeschylus had survived, we should know better how he would solve the problem of the suffering of those who are merciful and loving.

A century and more after Aeschylus, Plato in the *Republic* discusses righteousness and its fate on earth. He alludes to a verse from Aeschylus' drama, *The Seven Against Thebes*, “a man who would *be* just, not merely seem to be”; of such a man, who seeks righteousness for

its own sake and not for the good name that he may hope to win thereby, Plato makes Glaucon say: "Let him then be stripped of everything except his righteousness, and be placed in exactly the opposite situation to the unrighteous man. Remaining innocent, let him be universally believed to be guilty, so that his righteousness may be thoroughly tested, not being affected by an evil reputation and all its consequences. Let him then go unmoved to his death, throughout his life regarded by men as unrighteous, but really righteous. Then when the two men have thus come to the final point, the one of righteousness, the other of unrighteousness, let it be judged which of them is the happier." Early in the history of Christendom it was noticed that Plato goes on to speak of the righteous man as enduring suffering and even crucifixion. Glaucon's words are: "They will say that the righteous man, so circumstanced, will be scourged, tortured, put in chains, have his eyes burnt out, and finally, after enduring all sufferings, will be crucified."

In the Old Testament prosperity is as a rule interpreted as a sign of God's favor, and adversity as a proof of His displeasure at sins



committed. But this doctrine could not be made to apply to all suffering. The conscience protested.

"I said, I will take heed to my ways,  
That I offend not in my tongue.  
I will keep my mouth as it were with a bridle,  
While the ungodly is in my sight.  
I held my tongue, and spake nothing:  
I kept silence, yea, even from good words;  
But it was pain and grief to me.  
My heart was hot within me,  
And while I was thus musing the fire kindled;  
And at the last I spake with my tongue."

—PSALM 39: 1-4.

The book of Job is occupied from beginning to end with the problem of suffering. Job's friends seek to break down his assurance of his own innocence, and urge him to make confession of sin, lest their own doctrine of retribution should break down. But Job has a good conscience.

"Wherefore do the wicked live,  
Become old, yea, wax mighty in power?  
Their seed is established with them in their sight,  
And their offspring before their eyes.  
Their houses are safe from fear,  
Neither is the rod of God upon them."

—JOB 21: 7-9.

In the presence of the higher righteousness of Christ such self-justification becomes impossible; just as the psalmist's conviction of the



cleanness of their own hands and their own freedom from blame could not be maintained in the more searching light cast by the life and teaching of the Son of Man. Yet Job is contending for truth and justice, so far as he understands them. The young Elihu bursts in like a tornado, furious with wrath. He is not unjustified; Job's three friends have no answer to make, and Elihu is indignant that a man should proclaim himself just before God. It is really he who in the poem of Job represents a higher religion, a religion that does not rest in the doctrine of retribution, but, with a deep consciousness of the littleness and imperfection of man, adores the almightiness of God and His wondrous ways.

But the most magnificent and dramatic treatment of the problem is that of Psalm 73, one of the Asaph psalms.

“Nevertheless, my feet were almost gone:  
My treadings had well nigh slipt.  
And why? I was grieved at the wicked:  
I do also see the ungodly in such prosperity.”

The ungodly exult in their success; the blasphemous words which they speak reach up to heaven, and the people greedily imbibe their teaching. They say, “How should God concern

Himself over such things?" The psalmist himself is tempted for a moment to say:

"Then have I cleansed mine heart in vain,  
And washed mine hands in innocency."

What is the use of being conscientious and faithful? But he is restrained by the thought of the people of God:

"Yea, and I had almost said even as they:  
But lo, then I should have condemned the generation of  
Thy children."

And when he probes the matter further, he learns that the prosperity of the ungodly is but a transient thing, a dream. He confesses:

"Thus my heart was grieved:  
And it went even through my reins.  
So foolish was I, and ignorant:  
Even as it were a beast before Thee."

Each of these three writers, the authors of the 39th Psalm, the Book of Job, and the 73d Psalm, reaches a personal solution of the problem of suffering. In the 39th Psalm, consolation comes when the psalmist opens his mouth and pours out his complaint. He beholds vanity; and he is content to wait for the Lord. Job abases himself before the Lord's infinite majesty:



"I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear;  
But now mine eye seeth Thee,  
Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent  
In dust and ashes."

—JOB 42: 5, 6.

In the 73d Psalm, communion with God is felt to be mightier than the very gates of death. The psalmist does not occupy himself with notions of the joys of heaven and the miseries of hell. He just holds fast to the one thing. God is his all, and even suffering finds its solution when he knows that God is near him. He cannot now fear a hell of pain; he cannot desire the joys of a heaven.

"Nevertheless Thou art always by me;  
For Thou hast holden me by my right hand.  
Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel,  
And after that receive me with glory.  
Whom have I in heaven but Thee?  
And there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison  
of Thee.  
My flesh and my heart faileth;  
But God is the strength of my heart,  
And my portion for ever."

—PSALM 73: 23-26.

Personal solutions, yes; but where are we to find a universal solution of the problem of suffering? Various views emerge. Suffering cannot always be explained as punishment; men must be careful how they adopt such an an-



swer, when the suffering of others is in mind. There is a wide gap between the exultation of some psalmists over the ruin of their adversaries, and Christ's words to His disciples about the peril of judging (Luke 13: 1-5; John 9: 3). Suffering can have other meanings than punishment. It can be educative, it can be a testing, it can be a purifying; it can even be a means for the vindication of God's honor and the glory of the Most High.

But not even these explanations are sufficient. A dim sense of the Divine purpose of suffering begins to appear in the Greek drama; but the great eternal text stands written for us in the Old Testament Book of Consolation and the second part of the Book of Isaiah.

### III

FROM PRIMEVAL TIMES the mystery of suffering has been reflected in religious rituals. Men had always had a sense that suffering had some intimate connection with God's own nature and activity. Long before Moses, and a thousand years before the prehistoric ancestors of the chosen people, the patriarchs, fed their flocks in Canaan, the temples and the countryside in Babylon used to resound at springtime

with cries of lamentation and songs of grief over the death of Tammuz. The poignant sorrow of the women's lament over the death of "the true son" Dmuzi, or "the lord" Adonis, can touch our hearts after five thousand years, when we read the fragments that have survived. This was followed by jubilation over the god's return to life. The intention of the whole ritual appears to have been to assist the growth of the crops; but there was also present in it a human sense of the divine mystery of suffering. We hear echoes of the same note in many quarters—from the mournful playing of the flute at human sacrifices in Mexico, to the rituals of the Mediterranean peoples which spoke of the death and rising again of a young saviour-god, and the Balder story of Scandinavia. What wild mob is this which surges through the streets of Rome at the season which will one day be called Easter? Priests are bleeding from self-inflicted wounds, and oriental instruments of music accompany songs of lamentation. It is the ritual of Attis, who dies that he may come to life again.

Such rites are found in the most varied places in the religions of the world; but from the pure Mosaic and prophetic religion they



are absent. Insofar as they were adopted by the Israelite people in the confused period of syncretism of the religious renaissance of the eighth and seventh centuries, it was an apostasy. But experience of the hard realities of life and the events of history gave to Israel's saints an incomparably deeper insight into the mystery of suffering than the pagan rituals could ever have suggested. The great author of the Book of Consolation knew that the Servant of the Lord must suffer pain and death.

"Behold, My servant shall deal wisely,  
He shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high.  
Like as many were astonished at thee,  
(His visage was so marred more than any man,  
And his form more than the sons of men),  
So shall he sprinkle many nations;  
Kings shall shut their mouths at him:  
For that which had not been told them shall they see;  
And that which they had not heard shall they understand.  
Who hath believed our report?  
And to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?  
For he grew up before Him as a tender plant,  
And as a root out of a dry ground:  
He hath no form nor comeliness;  
And when we see him, there is no beauty that we should  
desire him.  
He was despised, and rejected of men;  
A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief:  
And as one from whom men hide their face he was despised,  
And we esteemed him not.  
Surely he hath borne our griefs,  
And carried our sorrows:

Yet we did esteem him stricken,  
Smitten of God, and afflicted.  
But he was wounded for our transgressions,  
He was bruised for our iniquities:  
The chastisement of our peace was upon him;  
And with his stripes we are healed.  
All we like sheep have gone astray;  
We have turned every one to his own way;  
And the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed, yet he humbled himself  
And opened not his mouth;  
As a lamb that is led to the slaughter,  
And as a sheep that before her shearers is dumb;  
Yea, he opened not his mouth.  
By oppression and judgment he was taken away;  
And as for his generation, who among them considered  
That he was cut off out of the land of the living?  
For the transgression of my people was he stricken  
And they made his grave with the wicked,  
And with the rich in his death;  
Although he had done no violence,  
Neither was any deceit in his mouth.

Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him;  
He hath put him to grief:  
When Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin,  
He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days,  
And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.  
He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied:  
By his knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many:  
And he shall bear their iniquities.  
Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great,  
And he shall divide the spoil with the strong;  
Because he poured out his soul unto death,  
And was numbered with the transgressors:  
Yet he bare the sin of many,  
And made intercession for the transgressors."

—ISAIAH 52: 13—53: 12.



Here is the marvel. Christ comes, and He fulfils both the ancient rituals of the world religions and the idea of the Servant of the Lord, *Ebed Jahve*, as depicted by the Prophet of Consolation.

The Christian Church carries on in part the old rituals. Christendom wept and mourned; and in time there came into being a Good Friday music which expresses the Divine mystery of suffering better than any words. But now it was no young god who died and rose again with the spring; it was a man of flesh and blood, who had been crucified on Calvary, Jesus of Nazareth, a figure in history, who now gathered up in Himself all the rites of lamentation in many nations and languages over the death of a god. The Passion now passed out of ritual into history.

A wonderful continuity, this. We are accustomed to read the Old Testament with the New; the Epistle to the Hebrews applies to Christ the sacrificial conception of Israel in all its fullness and depth of meaning. But a day is coming when the science of religions will have learned to interpret the much wider continuity of our Saviour's death and resurrection with the ancient pagan rituals. There also it

will see a prophecy and a fulfilment; it will see types created by the longing of the human soul and its dim perception of reality, till the time came for them to become flesh and blood. Then it will be seen how strangely Christ fulfils even the idolatrous rites of weeping for Tammuz, which the women in the eighth chapter of Ezekiel are seen carrying on in the Temple at Jerusalem; and how the Roman soldiers had a dim sense of an inner meaning, when they arrayed Pilate's prisoner as a king of May revels, with purple robe and crown.

For very many years I have had to busy myself with these subjects in thought and study; and still my wonder never loses its freshness. I can never cease marveling how, since primeval times, our race has connected suffering with its deepest idea of the Divine—till in the end an instrument of execution became the greatest of all religious symbols: the Cross. The way of suffering is God's own way.

Sooner or later suffering demands for itself a place in men's outlook on life. In the presence of the unutterable grief, called out by calamity, it may seem to be sheer cruelty to point the sufferer to the ultimate purpose of suffering, and tell him that these things must



happen in order that a blessing born of pain may proceed therefrom. Yet such is the fact: by the marvelous working of God there is brought forth out of calamity a goodness, a compassion, an atonement, an ethical value, a purification, a hold on reality, which none could have guessed before. No view of life which leaves suffering out of account can suffice.

Whether the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah signifies primarily the suffering nation, or some individual, or a group within the nation, is a question which we cannot decide with certainty. Perhaps it is the first of these. But Plato is right when he puts in Socrates' mouth the assertion that prophets say more than they themselves know; and the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah finds its full meaning only in the Saviour's cross. It is this Song of the Suffering Servant that gives the deepest interpretation of the mystery of suffering, and the clearest anticipation of the redemptive Passion of the Christ.

By His stripes we are healed. Jesus must sound the depths of shame and suffering. He is struck off the roll of the respectable members of the Israelite nation; a citizen of good stand-

ing was never nailed up on a cross. Look for Him in the annals of His people, and He is found among the list of criminals. Listen at His cross, and we hear a piercing cry of woe. Why is all this? Could not the human race and its greatest son be spared so terrible a disgrace? Why the offense, the scandal of the cross? The answer is: If sin and evil were an idea or a notion, then Jesus also might be just a notion. But sin is real. Therefore Christ also must be real.

Such is the power of sin that the victory over it cannot be peaceably won: only by a life-and-death conflict, and of that conflict suffering forms part. The solidarity of good demands a readiness to let go of the self and surrender the self, as Jesus said: "The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep" (John 10: 11). So Thomas Carlyle writes: "I tell you, brother, the brave man has got to give his life away."

Logic and legality may isolate the individual man, allotting to each his own actions and their consequences. But the reality of moral relations is richer and more complicated than logic can admit. No, there is no cause for alarm; no one is going to get rid of



his own personal responsibility. The truth which we are seeking to express can only have the effect of deepening the sense of responsibility; but it also brings some encouragement. What a man is, and what he does, whether it be great or small, affects the whole race, as moral gain or loss. The moral gains help to form a treasure store, out of which nothing indeed can be bought, but on which we all live, each in his degree.

Evil is a hideous reality, an awful power. No one can explain it, or understand its nature. It is in vain that human thought has endeavored to explain sin and misfortune as the dark colors which are necessary for the harmony and completeness of the whole picture. No such explanation will stand. Even the great thinker who has been called the Protestant philosopher *par excellence*, Immanuel Kant, stands in the presence of the riddle of sin and speaks of a radical evil. There is a mysterious fellowship, or solidarity, whose presence can be felt, or lies concealed, under the surface, always threatening to show its effects at one point or another. A man tells a lie. The first effect is that his own soul is soiled and harmed. His soul is not the same as it was

before; its brightness has been clouded over. Then, the liar has done harm to his neighbor, by the confusion that he has implanted in his soul. An open and honest confession can indeed smooth out these evil results. But the effect of the lie operates not only in the outward world, where the sting of the falsehood can be drawn through repentance and forgiveness; its consequences have become part of the complex of the world of spirit. The Divine world order has received an affront; the clear stream of truth has been muddied; a dark stain has appeared on the vesture of life. What I have written I have written. Men's offenses and negligences combine to form a kingdom of sin, of mysterious and incalculable power.

On the other side, opposed to the solidarity of the curse, must be set the solidarity of the blessing. But only a righteousness active to purify and a love ready for every sacrifice could bestow on this solidarity of the blessing power sufficient to prevail.

For the evil in the world was worse than the world believed. The evil in us, in you and in me, is worse than we like to think. Dirty clothes require a thorough washing before



they can be clean again; and so it was with mankind. Mankind stood in need of God's own aid. Our own power cannot avail. Every man needs the power of God to save him.

The deepest of all mysteries in life is the power of suffering patiently endured in love. Suffering has a painful but infinitely important part to play in the moral salvation and preservation of mankind. I know a sick man,<sup>1</sup> who, after a happy and healthy boyhood, full of the joy of life, became the victim of diseases, each one more serious and painful than the last, bed-ridden for years at a time, and finally for life, a prey to sleepless nights and torturing thoughts, pondering, like so many others, over the meaning of suffering—"Why should I be singled out to suffer?"—who nevertheless has learned in this hard school an art of self-expression which has made him to

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<sup>1</sup> The reference is to Bengt Nylund, who passed to his rest on February 13, 1930, two years after this book was published, at the age of forty-five. While still in his teens he suffered from hip disease, and from that time onwards he was constantly in hospital; for the last thirteen years he was wholly bed-ridden. Yet during this last period he found a vocation as a writer of sparkling books of adventure for boys, a class of literature which previously had been very poorly represented in Swedish; he wrote a dozen books of this type, besides two little books of consolation for the sick. His life is told in *Bengt Nylund, en hjältesaga* (the story of a hero) by Dr. O. Centerwall, Stockholm, 1931. (Translator's Note.)

others, both sick and whole, a help and a strength and an example. He writes: "Sin, guilt, and suffering affect all mankind; therefore it cannot be exclusively the fault of the individual, or of those nearest to him, that he suffers. No! He bears a burden which belongs to humanity. All mankind is one living organism, whose parts—that is, individuals—must bear in solidarity the burdens laid upon them. One has one vocation in life, and one another; we sick have ours in suffering. When we bear our burden with submission and with gladness, then we, even we, are doing our part, even we may take off something of the guilt which rests on ourselves and on all mankind, and even in us God's glory is manifested." And he quotes some words of one of his fellow-initiates into the mystery of suffering: "I believe that if we willingly take up our cross and unite it with that of Christ, and suffer in small measure what He suffered in great, we may in some slight degree help to hasten the final triumph of good over evil."

Ordinary life and a hidden existence unknown to the world may embrace a suffering fully as difficult and testing as great world catastrophes.



## IV

YET THE MIND of the natural man protests against assigning to suffering a place in the ordering of God's household.

Religion develops. Coarse and crude rituals are purified. Teaching is spiritualized. There is a search for unity in the bewildering and contradictory manifoldness of things. There is an endeavor to eliminate from myths and rites that which is morally objectionable, or at least to cover it over with the interpretative art of higher religion. The normal development of religion must be a progress in clearness, beauty, and morals.

Then, at the highest level of religion, there bursts in something incomprehensible and horrible. The Cross on Calvary—could there be a more hideous or repulsive sight? Naked bodies, wounded and bloody, broken and torn, writhe in pain. The vulgar curiosity of the crowd has always been attracted by executions, and a common theory of modern legislation has deliberately set itself to exhibit punishment to the multitude in all its horror as a deterrent. Humane and merciful men prefer to avert their eyes from such a spectacle, and turn elsewhere; thanks be to God, there

is plenty that is beautiful and lovely to behold on our earth. But the amazing thing is this: the horrible spectacle of one crucified as a criminal is the central point in the highest religious worship of the human race.

Our religion is the religion of the Cross. In the Cross the religion of the leading peoples of the world finds its briefest and best summary. When men began to seek after the innermost meaning of things, to ask whether there was a God, and to strike out on the road which we call religion, they found themselves confronted one day with that most awful thing, the Cross. But does the heart's response to the mystery of existence really call for so awful a symbol? Should not religion rather have taken the opposite course, and become ever more and more beautiful, ever more and more rational? Least of all would an instrument of execution, a gallows, a cross, seem to be in place.

Here is the answer. Men were reckoning with this, that humanity should be seeking after the innermost meaning of things, seeking after God. But men were not reckoning that God on His part might be seeking after them. Then something happened which could never



have been the creation of any man's thought. We pass from a world of fantasy, built up by men out of their notions and their dreams, to the real world which God has built. It is shown to us in the religion of the Cross.

So bloodily realistic, so incredibly brutal is the climax of God's revelation in history. Human reason is silenced. Theories of progress and development are confounded. Once for all, the Cross is raised. Notions can be modified and spiritualized; but the Cross is not a notion. It is a thing, an instrument of execution, made of wood, with a body nailed to it, suffering the pains of death.

What does it mean? The truth is not pleasant, and the truth to which the Cross witnesses with unique power is that sin is horrible. Oftentimes innocent men have been punished, and the best of mankind have been condemned to death. But once and once only have men been asked what they would do with Him who was holy without spot, pure without stain, with Him who was the brightness of God's glory and the image of His substance. Then they answered: Crucify Him, crucify Him.

Man, seeking after God, has shaped many

and various notions about the Divine. Civilization has refined these notions, and sought to bring them into accord with higher demands of thought and with nobler ideals. But the Cross is the hardest riddle in the history of religion. To us the word "cross" gives little idea of the abominable shame and horror which belonged to it in the view of the ancient world, and belong to it in reality. Jesus has shown His sovereign power in transforming even the meanings of words; the Cross has become to humanity its sublimest symbol, instead of signifying, as it does in reality, the cruellest death penalty. If for the word "cross" we were to write "gallows," we should get more idea of the real meaning. Someone has written a book about Christ with the title, *The Man Whom They Hanged*. Paul says, "We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness" (I Cor. 1:23); and we may safely generalize his words, and say that so barbaric an idea, and still more so barbaric a fact, cannot fail to be a stumbling-block and foolishness to all civilized humanity. How then can we explain this fact, that Christianity points mankind to the figure of the Crucified, so repulsive



to every refined and cultivated taste? For me the answer is clear and inevitable. The more I ponder on these things, the clearer it becomes that Christianity and the Cross is a new Divine creation.

There had been, of course, anticipations, as we have seen; beliefs in a god of life, a saviour-god, dying and rising again to new life. For heathen religion, with its many gods, the idea of a god suffering is not so hard to assimilate. While one god suffered, another might be resting in blessed peace. But for Christianity the matter is more difficult; it seems to contain a contradiction. The revelation in history proclaims that Christ, the supreme and essential revelation of God, suffers and dies. Teachers, more zealous and well-intentioned than scriptural or orthodox, have sometimes so interpreted the Godhead of Christ after a metaphysical fashion as to run the risk of representing God the Father as crucified, or, what is worse, of making Calvary and the cry of pain, "Eli, Eli," into a kind of unreal transaction within the Divine Being. But the Christian Church has always refused to infer, from the doctrine of the Godhead of Christ, that God Himself, the One,

the Only, the Almighty, suffers. And yet the idea, rejected by the Church in the form which it took in the Gnostic systems, has persisted in coming up in new shapes. Life and history are full of suffering; that which is new and important and full of blessing seems always unable to realize itself otherwise than through pain and death. Thus Pascal beheld the exalted Saviour in heaven still enduring the agony of the Cross. The thought that there must be suffering in God has forced itself forward in the minds of Christian thinkers. Men have asked, first silently and timidly, then more boldly: "Does God suffer with us and for us?" And they have answered: "Yes. God Himself through conflict and pain actualizes His dominion over the unfeeling order of nature and the resistance of human inertia and wickedness. It is a toilsome and agonizing way. But if we obey the voice that speaks within us, we have no choice. We must yield ourselves to God in unconditional obedience, coöperate with Him, share in the conflict and agony which is His, and through all obstacles of nature and circumstances and sin, within and without, receive His help that we may enter His Kingdom."



Such a conception cannot be reconciled with the first article of our Creed. Yet it corresponds to something which is deeply imbedded in the religious spirit and in the Gospel.

The truth about God's strange dealings with His world has often found expression in ways which do not satisfy. The very idea of God as Himself involved in conflict, suffering, and pain shows how inadequate is our thought to comprehend and express God's nature. Yet such a conception, halting and lame in expression though it be, is more in accord with the strange and tragic conditions of human life and with the essence of Christianity, than a view of things which would embrace God and the course of this world in a patent scheme in which all goes smoothly from start to finish. It may be a pity that we were not invited to help in arranging how the course of the world should run. But in the real world God's way must lead through suffering. The truth that there is a way through suffering to salvation and atonement had been dimly guessed at through long ages, and had found expression in passion rituals—till at last the Passion passed out of ritual into history. The Man of

Sorrows came, He who was also God's Holy One, the Man of Joy and victorious trust. The revelation of God came in the love and purity of Christ even unto death.

Men have sought after God, and seeking, have shaped their notions of God and their religious ideals. But at the same time a greater thing was taking place: God was seeking man, and His labor to win man and to help him necessarily involved vicarious suffering. The Cross is the supreme proof that God was seeking man, seeking him that He might lift him up and take him to His fatherly heart. But God's method was as opposite as possible to man's. And why? It was not merely that individual human lives were poisoned and corrupted by evil; the structure of society itself and even the holy ordinances of religion were so defiled by the incalculable and complex influences of falsehood and unrighteousness that the Messenger who fulfilled God's purpose of seeking and saving the human race could not but be condemned by ordinary men and ordinary human institutions. The Cross of Calvary does not belong merely to liturgy or to theology; it is the supreme Woe in human history.



Yet this fact of history has proved itself mightier than any other fact or any religious idea. We are compelled to say that Paul is right: "The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (I Cor. 1:25). God's methods are not ours. Christ told us the law of God's working when He said that the Son of Man was come to minister and to give His life, and that he who loses his life for His sake, for love's sake, shall find it. Christianity stands by itself among the religions of the world. It is not the creation of man's search for God, but the creation of God Himself in His seeking after man. The hand of God was sorely wounded when He stretched it out to lift up man from entanglement with sin. But He prevailed.

No rationalism, ancient or modern, can ever take the place of the inexhaustible drama of Christianity, which embraces all history, of the race and of the individual, and gives it meaning. Its center and climax is at Calvary. But it continues in every generation, in the mysterious spiritual solidarity, which, alike for suffering and for redemption, unites mankind with invisible bonds. In our Christian fellowship there is continually reproduced

something of the mystery of the Cross, wherever one suffers for another's sin, with a love that manifests something of God's power. This drama must in its degree be continued in the story of every human soul. This, and this only, is Christianity.

There is *one* dogma that is weightier than all the rest. He who stands in the presence of this dogma and does not know what it means may be as zealous as possible for the literal inspiration of the Bible, for dogmas and tradition—it is all of little use, if in any degree he obscures the real essence of Christianity, which is the Mystery of the Cross, our highest, nay our only hope in life and in death.

The meaning for us of the fact of Jesus and His passion, quite apart from the following in His steps and the transformation of life which must result, has been expressed by the Church in the formula which of all others has been most thoroughly and unanimously condemned in the name of reason and morals—*satisfactio vicaria*. The old orthodox teaching expressed this doctrine in juridical terms; in criticism of its anthropomorphism and its other defects there was much to be said that was worth saying, and much more that was



not worth saying has been said. This theological formulation is now a back number in theology, and rightly; but it still lives in the language of simple piety as the most powerful expression of the truth of which I am speaking. Of the soul's experience and of the spiritual fact no satisfying theological explanation exists. It is impossible to speak of a mere transaction between the Divine Sufferer and the soul of man. It is a dearly bought gift, involving on man's side a sacred obligation. No rationalism can rob mankind of this inestimable possession.

But why is it that Jesus alone, after all the fantasies of saviour-gods, should be born into the world and suffer and die and overcome death, and stand for all time as the central figure of our race? We found a cause for wonder in the thought of the long ages of anticipation leading up to the fulfilment; here is a second. Why should it be just He alone, out of all the millions who have lived and died on this earth? Have there not been other equally remarkable men, if only we could bring them to light? Out of the endless diversity of the kingdom of nature and of human history to take this one only, the pale Nazarene, as the

central figure, the first-begotten in God's great family—anyone can say that it is contrary to all reason. But ponder over it, ponder over all the rest; compare, investigate. Is there another? History answers unambiguously: No, there is no other. We try to explain the circumstances which contributed to give Jesus His central position; we take into account the Divine revelation in Israel's history, Paul, the spiritual needs of the ancient civilized world, the saviour-gods in divine and human form. But we cannot escape from the stumbling-block, the "unreasonable" fact, of His exaltation, that His name should be above every name. We cannot escape from the two main reasons for His unique position. The first is the tradition of Israel, together with pagan religions, which had for long ages been preparing a place for Him; and the fact that when He came He had the power to make the whole previous story of man's search for God into a preparation for Himself. The second and greater reason, which no explanation can explain away, is the personality of Jesus Himself, His passion and His victory, the eternal wonder of the world.

One man suffers for another. Suffering pa-



tiently endured preaches a more powerful sermon than any spoken words. It does not fail in its effect. It purifies the spiritual atmosphere. It has a mysterious power to restore and to reconcile, to atone. Something of the mystery of vicarious suffering is seen everywhere in the social life of men, for him who has eyes to see and a mind to discern the inner meanings of things. But the great universal exhibition of this principle is seen at Calvary.

## V

THE WORK OF THE CROSS is twofold. Evil is unmasked, and God's mercy is manifested.

Evil is unmasked. Who is this who draws the veil off sin, stripping off the protective covering from temptation and pride, vice and duplicity, forcing human vainglory and human iniquity to surrender their power to entice mankind, and revealing the deadliness of their fascination? The unmasking was a bloody piece of work; but it was effective. There stands sin in its naked ugliness. We cannot be deceived any more; we must look the truth in the face. Nor can we excuse ourselves. We cannot point the finger at others and say,

See what these have done. We ourselves come under judgment.

Let us look at the story. Though it be the cruellest act of injustice known to history, we are bound to follow the rule of putting the best interpretation on men's motives; for the Saviour Himself prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

The Pharisees and the Scribes saw in Jesus the revolutionary, who was undermining the traditional religion and weakening the fear of God. Long years of effort had added precept to precept, for the ordering of life from the cradle to the grave in fear and obedience to the Most High, according to the demands of holiness and purity. But how easily might the people be tempted to throw aside the restraints of holiness, and turn to live like the heathen! And now came this Rabbi, mighty in word and deed, breaking down the law of the Sabbath and the law of ritual purity. He was tearing down what many generations had patiently built up. And He justified His destructive work. He could give sharp answers in debate. The prudent and devout saw in Him a dangerous leader of the people; His influence



must be neutralized. So think Pharisees and champions of legal religion in all ages, even in our own day and in our own land.

But together with their zeal for the ordinances of their fathers and for the sacred obligations of religion there was in the Pharisees a fanatical unscrupulousness. Their pride had been wounded; their self-righteousness had been trampled upon. With their devout indignation against the radical and plain-speaking favorite of the people there was mingled an element of personal resentment. He had pierced the bubble of their hypocrisy. Instead of pointing to them as models of true and strict godliness He had brought the specialists of religion into contempt.

The Chief Priests and Elders were steering a difficult middle course. On the one side stood the Roman authorities, whom they hated in their hearts as usurpers of power; but they must show all respect to them lest some worse fate should befall a nation which had already lost its independence. The defilements of the Temple by Antiochus Epiphanes and by the soldiers of Pompey were still fresh in their memory. On the other side there was the narrow-minded populace, carried away

from time to time by self-made revolutionary liberators. It was necessary to protect both State and Church. Jesus had aroused men's devotion and stirred up unrest; the people were crowding round Him, and the movement was not under control. If the avalanche once started there was no knowing where it would stop. Perhaps the Romans would come and take away their land, and then the last state would be worse than the first. The politicians' instinct bade them stop the flow of the rivulet before the popular movement round Jesus became an irresistible flood. Besides, this fanatic was evidently making unreasonable claims. Had He not made Himself a Messiah? Jesus could not conceal the fact. Had He not received Divine homage? Clearly, the hereditary or chosen leaders of the nation had a heavy responsibility. They must use foresight and prudence; nothing less than the welfare of the nation and the Church was at stake. This is an attitude of mind which we recognize in all ages, and in our own. Well-meaning anxiety for State and Church is incapable of appreciating that which is out of the ordinary and sets men's minds in movement. Tranquillity at all costs, they say; he



who disturbs tranquillity is the enemy of society.

The Chief Priests and the Elders were full of concern for the well-being of Jewish society. But they cannot be acquitted of a two-fold fault. First, they would not, dared not, probe the matter to the bottom; they shrank from closer investigation of this unusual man's teaching and aims. They did not test Him by the writings of the Prophets; their judgment was small-minded and external. And secondly, they followed out the maxim, not unknown elsewhere among ecclesiastics and politicians, that the end justifies the means. Better let one man die for the people than that the whole nation should come to disaster (John 11:50). What, after all, did one life matter—and that the life of a swollen-headed and dangerous agitator, or perhaps simply a well-meaning but foolhardy fanatic? Hence, when it was necessary to get Jesus out of the way, they were not too careful about the truth in the presence of Pilate. Better throw as much as possible of the responsibility on to the Governor. The right rule in public and private life is: Accept responsibility to the fullest extent, and bear it. But Jesus' accusers and

judges, both Jewish and Roman, took the opposite line, and shirked responsibility as much as they could.

It was indeed true that flames of revolt were being kindled in the popular mind—but not by Jesus. The Jewish people were enduring shame, vexation, and suffering under the Roman yoke, even if it is true that the Roman genius for government showed itself also in Judæa; from time to time an insurgent leader arose, attracted by the glorious example of the Maccabees. Here was one unlike the rest. Was He the Expected One? Or was He a deceiver?

The Passion forces men to make a decision. We see also the unintelligence and the panic of the Disciples; the zeal of Peter, and his fall; Judas, overpowered by his evil thoughts; Pilate's good intentions and his weakness. Upon ourselves also the question is forced, so that we cannot escape it: To which group do we belong?

For it was not malefactors who crucified Jesus. It is not possible for us to pour out our wrath on the criminals and hangmen in the story, as the dregs of humanity.

Who was it who raised the cross on Cal-



vary? Those who plotted against the Master were not bandits, of the sort who lay in wait on the road to Jericho. It was not criminals who took from Him His life. His enemies and executioners were not such as belong to the underworld of society, from whom respectable and good-living citizens seek to protect themselves. Criminals do indeed form part of the picture; but they are seen suffering the same affliction as the Saviour, crucified one on His right hand and one on His left. They were being punished for serious crimes; but they were not the men who took His life.

The Cross is horrible. The humane and refined man shrinks back and does not like to think of it. But there is something more awful than the horror of the crucifixion.

The most awful thing in the death of Jesus is that it was brought about by men who were following, or believed themselves to be following, good and honorable reasons for their action. Men of various classes, the guardians of religion and of public morals and of the order of society itself, united to crucify Jesus. They were men like you and me. That is why we keep Good Friday. None of us can exonerate himself from a share of responsibility

for what was then done. We had a share in bringing the Saviour to the Cross. The Cross accuses us all.

The story of the Passion concerns us personally. We discover there the seriousness of sin. The first effect of Calvary, for a serious and thinking man, must be to bring him to hate evil, so that for him sin now loses its charm. He is compelled to abhor that which once he tolerated. The attitude of indecision, weakness, compliance, hardness of heart, unscrupulous prudence—all this now becomes abhorrent; it loses its disguise. He can no longer now be content to move in that easy and pleasant borderland and between good and evil, between purity and impurity, between truth and falsehood, between uprightness and unloving selfishness. He is frightened away from it. He sees now that human life and its institutions have need of a thorough testing, judging, and purifying. Man himself is caught in this judgment. Christ on the cross judges him—but He does not condemn him. On the contrary, by His patient enduring of the consequences of evil He has established a new victorious solidarity among men. He Himself is the power which is communicated to every



man who will become partaker of Him. We share in the guilt; we may also share in the reconciliation and the abolition of the guilt by the Cross.

It is the simple truth that it was no extraordinary chain of circumstances that brought Jesus to His death. He was crucified by what we may call average sin. If we are ordinary people, or if we are not, we must bring our life into Christ's passion. There we recognize ourselves; we mark the peril of sin, we see its consequences. We ask, "How is it possible for such things to happen in this lovely world, under God's heaven?" We see that we must abhor sin in all its forms. We must not be content with understanding it and explaining it; it is abominable, deserving of our hatred. As we go deeper into the Passion we find in it not merely an image of the tragedy of life, with power to cleanse and mightily to stir our souls; we find that our own weal or woe is at stake. This Sufferer is more than a martyr; the marvel of His Passion is that He suffers for my sake, for your sake, for the sake of all these men who need to be terrified out of sin, and need something more, comfort and help against sin's accursed power.

But we cannot gain a part in the vicarious act of Calvary only by thinking. Our life must be incorporated in the Saviour and His work. "For the death that He died, He died unto sin once: but the life that He liveth, He liveth unto God. Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof" (Rom. 6: 10-12).

The worst enemy of the Cross of Christ is not he who openly denies or belittles its meaning, but he who owns the Christian name and lives a life unworthy of a man for whom Christ endured the pain of the Cross. The Cross is not only a gift, an aid; it also involves a sacred obligation, and it pronounces judgment on him who would appropriate its benefits without being renewed in his mind and putting the old man in him to death day by day. There is a responsibility in beholding the Crucified and hearing the preaching of the Cross; and the burden of it rests on him who would in a measure participate in its blessings, but at a cheap rate, without paying the full price. For the Cross cannot tolerate the old Adam; the self-love of the old nature



must be broken down, its falsehood must come to an end. "Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ: whose end is perdition, whose god is the belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Phil. 3: 18, 19).

## VI

BUT WE CANNOT STOP with the external story of Calvary, with the shocking and brutal tale of the sufferings of Christ. We must go on to ask, Who was it who carried the work through? Who was it who thus unmasked the terrible and complex reality of sin? There is only one answer: It was God Himself. None other had valor and power for such a deed; none other dared, none other could. Only God could do that work, and it has been done. It is finished. The suffering of Calvary needs not to be repeated. Calvary and the Cross conceals within itself, or rather unveils, in its Divine brutality, nothing less than God's own love. Poor, weak man cannot now any more stand and stare in desperation at human misery, or plunge in and be overwhelmed. For that which man discerns behind the horror of the

Cross is God's own love, a love that is super-human, a love which, to gain its end, did not refuse the humanly impossible but necessary means. It is infinite and incredible, as the self-sacrifice of the Saviour.

So much in earnest is God's love; so burns the heart of God with desire to save man. The Cross manifests God's mercy. Therefore they who need consolation find it from the Crucified. Mortal pain and the anguish of an evil conscience cry out to the Crucified, "Reach out thy finger and give me a drop of comfort," and He gives them comfort.

When human reason has set everything in its place in the most admirable way, and presented the whole course of the universe, in spite of discontinuities here and there, as a beautiful and harmonious scheme—then comes the ruthless intrusion of merciless Reality to destroy the lovely picture. It is pain to us to find how inadequate are our powers to serve as a measure of all things. The strident oppositions stand like a mass of impassable mountains, blocking the horizon ahead. But, coming to us through the midst of this tragical and intractable confusion, there meets us a Divine love, which gives us a hint of a higher unity



and a deeper meaning than we are able to perceive or expound. God becomes a reality with which we must reckon in our ponderings on our life and the course of this perplexing world. There is a Mystery of Salvation, pressing in upon our life, and breaking its way through.

To weaken down and rationally to explain away the central mystery of Christianity and of Salvation simply will not do. The experience of the power of the Cross to reconcile and restore, which till lately seemed so old-fashioned and difficult, has now become the most palpable and necessary of the truths of religion—nay, *the* truth itself—however hard it be to find an expression for it.

God loves us in spite of all. His love is a stronger power than the power of sin and evil, stronger than the united forces of worldly cunning, stronger than our own doubting hearts, which so readily are crushed down by consciousness of guilt into little-faith and despair. "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things" (I John 3:20).

Therefore souls have taken of the best that they had, to offer to Christ in the warm and

devout homage of passion hymns. The joy that God has undertaken the work of man's salvation, regardless of the cost, is a joy that knows no limit. For God's love and the value of the human soul are both infinites. The awfulness of the task and the joy of salvation both reach their climax in the Cross.

The tragedy of life has fresh light cast upon it. The suffering that is laid upon us becomes no longer mere punishment but penance, a share in the passion of Christ. Shall we not rejoice and be glad that we are not under the dominion of the impersonal forces of the universe, but of the love of God? My Lord has redeemed, bought, and won me, a ruined and lost man, from all sins, from death and the devil's power, not with gold or silver, but with His holy and precious blood and His innocent suffering and death; that so I might belong to Him, and live and have my being under Him in His Kingdom, and serve Him in eternal righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as He is risen from the dead, and lives and reigns for evermore.



## VII

THE PASSION MUSIC which the Church has created, and which has gained an added depth and a new richness and spirituality since the revival of Christianity in the sixteenth century, provides along its own line the greatest of all the interpretations which can rank with the inspired sources of the Old and New Testaments. I would not hesitate to give the name of "the fifth Gospel" to the musical interpretation of the story of redemption, which reaches its highest point in John Sebastian Bach. Very deeply do the *Passion According to St. Matthew* and the *Mass in B Minor* enter into the mystery of suffering and redemption.

The *Mass in B Minor* has for part of its text the Nicene Creed. In the first section of the Creed the glory of the Creator is powerfully set forth, and in the beginning of the second, the eternal procession of the Son from the Father, Light from Light. It is after this that we come to the great mystery of the *Mass in B Minor*, the very recollection of which brings the soul to a wondering reverence in presence of the tragedy of life and the mystery of redemption. At the head stand the words, "And was conceived by the Holy Ghost of the vir-

gin Mary, and was made man"; Christmas is to be imagined, the Child in the manger. But now—above the heavy hammer-blows of the basses, on B-flat, in triple time, who next go deeper and deeper down, till at last half unwillingly they blend with the more expressive sorrow melody of the other parts, the fiddles give out a tune which might be interpreted as sobs or dropping tears, and then the alto begins the incomparable melody which carries back the idea of the Passion of Christ right to the beginning of His earthly life. It is the same conception which is rendered in embroidery on the most beautiful of the medieval chasubles in Upsala Cathedral: the unknown artist has placed the Christmas idyll right in the middle of the Cross. But Bach's interpretation of the human tragedy is no dull pessimism; it forms the background of the power of suffering to atone and to reconcile. The *Crucifixus* takes us into the depths of the mystery of redemption; then, after the death on the cross, quiet chords in G minor accompany the laying of the Crucified to rest in the grave—till the clash of trumpets announces the Resurrection to new life, and the royal majesty of the Crucified is declared.



These are only the musings of an amateur musician. They are set forth here in order to assert that John Sebastian Bach, and other musicians in their degree before and after him, are thinkers and in the true sense theologians: that is to say, they have a knowledge of God and His redemptive work, and express it in music. This does not mean that the music is thereby forced to assume an abstract or artificial character; on the contrary, no music could possibly be more full of tone or musical sequence than the masterpiece of which I have been speaking. Both in regard to the general religious sense of awe and reverence in the presence of the holy and the eternal, and to the Christian and evangelical conviction of the mystery of suffering and atonement, music is able to be more expressive than any words; it can provide in the expressiveness of tone a richer interpretation of the inmost meaning of the Gospel and of the mystery of existence. A partial comparison may be made with action, which, whether from the point of view of the subject himself or of the spectator, is capable of saying more than can directly be expressed by language. But there must be a receptiveness on the part of him who hears or

who looks on; this is an absolute condition, and it is not surprising. There is a freemasonry of sympathy between all who know what is the meaning of suffering and reconciliation. The marvel of this music is power made perfect in weakness. The last and highest tones are those of the eternal triumph.

### VIII

SOMEONE HAS SAID:

"Reason cries: 'If God were good, He could not look upon the sin and misery of man and live, His heart would break.'

"The Church points to the crucifix and says: 'God's heart did break.'

"Reason cries: 'Born and reared in sin and as we are, how can we keep from sin? It is the Creator who is responsible, it is God who deserves to be punished.'

"The Church kneels by the Cross and whispers: 'God takes the responsibility and bears the punishment.'

"Reason cries: 'Who is God, what is God? The name stands for the unknown. It is blasphemous to say we know Him.'

"The Church kisses the feet of the dying Christ and says, 'We must worship the majesty



which we see' "—the majesty of the Crucified, the majesty of Love, the majesty of suffering, where Love gives itself for our sake.

God's love is stronger than our guilt, stronger than our doubt, stronger than our human or inhuman suffering. God's love shrinks from nothing, not even from a hell of suffering, in order to lead us to Paradise. "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." The Cross reconciles us with God.

Be ye also reconciled with God. Stand by the Cross, hear the accusation; receive the reconciliation and the restoration. Live as new men according to the Mind of Christ. Find at the Cross forgiveness and new courage. Learn at the Cross to watch and to pray. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof; neither present your members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (Rom. 6: 12, 13). "He died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him who for their sakes died and rose again" (II Cor. 5: 15). "Wherefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature:

the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new" (II Cor. 5: 17). "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord" (I Cor. 15: 58).

If we have an eternal hope we can never be tired out. "Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him that hath endured such gainsaying of sinners against themselves, that ye wax not weary, fainting in your souls" (Heb. 12: 1-3).



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